

ClimateStock: Putting Global Change into the Weathercast

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Budget: \$100,000, including contracted animation and production services, studio time, and satellite uplinks

Staff time: Roughly 800 person-hours from UCAR Communications staff over three years

TV weathercasters are the single most visible representatives of science in U.S. households. Yet by and large, they focus on day-to-day weather events rather than the larger-scale, longer-term processes that make up climate. In their role as scientific emissaries, TV weathercasters have a unique opportunity to convey the facts and uncertainties about global climate change to the public. With support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, UCAR Communications produced a series of B-roll videos from 1997 to 2000 to help weathercasters understand global climate change issues and address them in their programming. The nine video packages included:

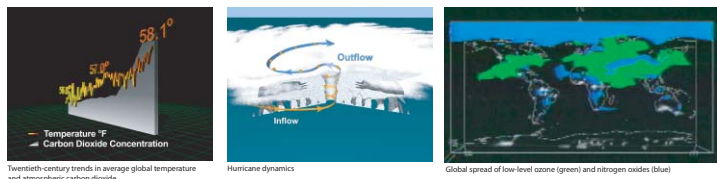
Interviews with leading scientists from UCAR/NCAR and other institutions



Stock footage of major weather events, such as the Montreal ice storm of 1998 and the 1997 Red River flooding



Visualizations of weather and climate concepts, produced in-house or acquired from other sources



Plus: On the Web, shot lists and suggested scripts that index the appropriate ClimateStock segments and provide additional narration

www.ucar.edu/climatestock

ClimateStock Installments

Title	Released	Videotapes ordered*	First-month rating**
Vol. 1: El Niño and La Niña	October 1997	7	19,000,000
Vol. 2: El Niño Update	March 1998	4	n/a
Vol. 3: Global Temperature and Human-Induced Climate Change	July 1998	10	540,000
Vol. 4: Hurricanes	September 1998	25	2,800,000
Vol. 5: Winter Storms and Climate	January 1999	31	n/a
Vol. 6: Hurricanes Update	June 1999	37	n/a
Vol. 7: Pollution and Climate	January 2000	8	230,000
Vol. 8: El Niño and La Niña Update	April 2000	5	n/a
Vol. 9: Global Temperature Update	April 2000	14	n/a
Vol. 5-9: Earth Day Compilation	April 2000	4	n/a

* Each B-roll was made available free via satellite uplink at the time of release and afterward at nominal cost in Beta or VHS format through Video Transfer Service, Rockville, MD. The orders above are from October 1998 through June 2001.

** When budgets allowed, a ratings service was employed to monitor usage of ClimateStock B-roll by commercial stations around the United States. The figures shown here are cumulative ratings from each usage of one second or longer.

How did we choose topics?

The timing of the releases was determined largely by news value (e.g., the hurricane package was released during the hurricane season).

- Over 200 weathercasters on a national e-mail listserve were polled informally at the outset to find out what topics were of most interest and what type of B-roll would best suit their needs.
- We also took into account the findings of Kris Wilson (University of Texas), who had surveyed TV weathercasters to determine their level of knowledge on global warming and related science.

What kind of results did we obtain?

- o **More than 20 million viewers** saw portions of at least one ClimateStock package
- o **More than 100 Beta tapes** have been ordered since fall 1998, many by documentary producers—a group not targeted by the original ClimateStock plan.
- o Some of the greatest visibility of ClimateStock products, particularly **animations**, has occurred in such documentaries as "What's Up with the Weather?" (NOVA/Frontline, April 2000) and "Hot Planet" (The Weather Channel, October 2000).

How might such a program work elsewhere?

- o Overall, the greatest interest from viewers and producers has been in **dramatic weather and climate events**, while pollution was one of the least popular topics.
- o The use of B-roll and suggested scripts allowed us to **emphasize key points** and control important aspects of the scientific message, while granting weathercasters the **flexibility** to tailor and localize their stories as they saw fit.
- o The ClimateStock model—moderately structured B-roll, vetted by experts for accuracy, yet designed to give broadcasters flexibility in its use—is well suited for large institutions carrying out research that is highly relevant to society yet difficult to translate.